
CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK

COMING HOME

In 1980, after a dozen years of Maoism and video, the director Jean-Luc Godard returned to the French film industry with "Every Man for Himself." He called it his "second first film," and it bristles with the energy of his engagement with



new stars, new techniques, and, above all, his own new candor. The pop singer Jacques Dutronc plays Paul Godard, an idled filmmaker in a romantic crisis sparked by the departure of his girlfriend (Nathalie Baye), who is also a filmmaker. He has an encounter with a prostitute (Isabelle Huppert) that opens a round of scenes about raw sexual commerce that suggest a sort of Method directing: profanity, perversity, humiliation, frustration, and violence erupt in luminous tableaux, painterly landscapes, and crisp Swiss city views that glow with the textural finesse of sunlight and available light and sing the artistic inspirations and psychic freedoms of modern Europe. Godard employs an unusual array of stop-action effects to gaze at his characters with a newfound fascination. The movie's rare equilibrium of inner and outer life is suffused with the quiet joy of an exile's return. It plays for two weeks at Film Forum, in a new print, beginning Nov. 12.

—Richard Brody
